

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 AID-20 AGR-20 EB-11 SCI-06

NASA-04 PC-15 TRSE-00 COME-00 LAB-06 SIL-01 DRC-01

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R 191400Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4840

INFO RUQSDA /AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 3651

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

DET 4 AFSCF MAHE ISLAND SEYCHELLES

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NAIROBI 8605

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SE, US

SUBJECT: US-SEYCHELLES RELATIONS

REF: STATE 226846 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY. RECENT VISIT TO SEYCHELLES BY CHARGE TO

ASSESS DEVELOPMENTS AND TRENDS RELEVANT TO US INTERESTS
CONFIRMED GROWING POLARIZATION OF POLITICAL SITUATION ON
ISLANDS AND LIKELIHOOD OF EARLY ELECTIONS. CHIEF MINISTER
MANCHAM, LEADER OF MAJORITY PARTY (SDP) ADVOCATES FULL
INTERNAL SELF-GOVERNMENT WITH RIGHTS OF SEYCHELLOIS IN
UK ANALOGOUS TO THOSE ENJOYED BY REUNION RESIDENTS IN
FRANCE; OPPOSITION PARTY (SPUP) ADVOCATES COMPLETE IN-
DEPENDENCE AND SOCIALISTIC APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT OF
SEYCHELLES ECONOMY. LEADERS OF BOTH PARTIES FAVOR EVEN-
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TUAL ONE PARTY SYSTEM (THEIR OWN) AND EXPECT THAT ELEC-

TIONS WILL BE CALLED SOMETIME IN 1974. OPPOSITION PARTY (SPUP), WHICH RECEIVING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM OAU, MAY BOYCOTT ELECTIONS UNLESS GOVERNOR GRANTS ITS REQUEST THAT ELECTORAL DISTRICTS BE REDRAWN. USAF TRACKING STATION AND TERMINATION OF OUR PL-480 FOOD PROGRAM LIKELY TO BE ELECTION ISSUES. CHARGE' ATTEMPTED TO MAKE PL-480 TERMINATION LESS ATTRACTIVE AS ELECTION ISSUE BY REITERATING FIRMLY TO CHIEF MINISTER MANCHAM (WHO HAS DERIVED CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL BENEFIT FROM PROGRAM) THAT THERE NO REPEAT NO POSSIBILITY RENEWAL THIS PROGRAM AFTER PRESENT FISCAL YEAR. HOWEVER, TRACKING STATION INVOLVEMENT IN ELECTION APPEARS UNAVOIDABLE AS OPPOSITION PARTY APPARENTLY BELIEVES THAT ADVERSE PUBLICITY ON STATION WILL GAIN VOTES AND AT SAME TIME BE WAY OF "REPAYING" OAU FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT. WHILE USAF SUB-CONTRACTOR WILL TAKE REASONABLE MEASURES TO AVERT STRIKE PRESENTLY THREATENED AGAINST STATION, WE SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR SOME ADVERSE PUBLICITY ON TRACKING STATION (OVER STRIKE OR OTHER PRETEXT) IN AFRICA AS WELL AS IN SEYCHELLES. CHARGE' RECOMMENDS THAT WE CONTINUE TO AVOID SUPPORTING EITHER PARTY AND THAT WE TRY TO IMPROVE GENERAL US IMAGE WITHIN SEYCHELLES THROUGH INCREASED SELF-HELP ASSISTANCE, EXPANSION OF PEACE CORPS PROGRAM, MORE FREQUENT VISITS TO SEYCHELLES BY MEMBERS OF THIS EMBASSY AND BETTER LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE OF US ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING MY DEC 2-6 VISIT TO THE SEYCHELLES, I HAD TWO LENGTHY MEETINGS WITH CHIEF MINISTER MANCHAM AND SEVERAL OF HIS MINISTERS. MANCHAM EXPRESSED STRONG DISPLEASURE OVER US DECISION TO TERMINATE PL-480 FOOD PROGRAM WHICH HE CLAIMED WILL AFFECT 8,000 CHILDREN IN THIS SMALL COLONY OF 50,000 PEOPLE. HE ARGUED THAT THIS WOULD BE PARTICULARLY DAMAGING TO POLITICAL PROSPECTS OF HIS PARTY (SDP) AND PRESSED HARD FOR US TO RENEW PROGRAM OR TO PROVIDE HIM WITH DIRECT FINANCIAL SUPPORT ON GROUNDS HIS PARTY "PRO-AMERICAN" AND "ANTI-COMMUNIST." I FIRMLY RESISTED GIVING HIM ANY ENCOURAGEMENT ON EITHER REQUEST, BUT EMPHASIZED OUR DETERMINATION TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE SELF-HELP FUNDS IN SUPPORT OF WORTHY PROJECTS
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(I SIGNED ONE AGREEMENT WITH APPROPRIATE PUBLICITY WHILE THERE) AND TO BEGIN SENDING PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS TO SEYCHELLES.

2. MANCHAM TOLD ME THAT HIS PARTY PLANS TO SEEK FULL INTERNAL SELF-GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING CONTROL OVER POLICE AND PRESS WHICH NOW EXERCISED BY BRITISH. (IT IS, HOWEVER, BY NO MEANS LIKELY THAT BRITISH WILL EASILY GIVE UP

THESE POWERS.) HE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO OBTAIN FOR SEY-
CHELLOIS RIGHTS IN UK ANALOGOUS TO THOSE ENJOYED BY
REUNION RESIDENTS IN FRANCE. MANCHAM ARGUED IN FAVOR
OF EVENTUAL ONE-PARTY POLITICAL SYSTEM (HIS PARTY, OF
COURSE) ON GROUNDS THAT THIS ONLY WORKABLE SYSTEM IN
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND BECAUSE OPPOSITION SPUP PARTY
ALLEGEDLY COMMUNIST AND OAU DOMINATED. HE CLAIMED THAT
SPUP IS NOW GETTING SUBSTANTIAL FOREIGN FINANCIAL SUPPORT
FROM OAU, WHICH RECENTLY ACCREDITED SPUP AS "AFRICAN LIBERATION
MOVEMENT." HE ALSO ALLEGED, WITH CONSIDERABLE IRRITATION,
THAT SINON GETTING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM AFL/CIO.

3. RE TRACKING STATION, MANCHAM SAID THAT TERMINATION OF
PL-480 FOOD PROGRAM WILL LEAD PEOPLE TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON
FACT THAT AMERICANS "NOT PAYING ANYTHING" FOR THIS FACI-
LITY. HE MAINTAINED THAT TRACKING STATION AGREEMENT,
WHICH EXEMPTS AMERICANS FROM PAYMENT INCOME TAXES AND
IMPORT DUTIES, VERY ONE-SIDED INsofar AS SEYCHELLOIS ARE
CONCERNED. WHILE I EMPHASIZED SUBSTANTIAL BALANCE OF PAY-
MENTS BENEFITS TO SEYCHELLES OF TRACKING STATION, I WAS
NEVERTHELESS LEFT WITH IMPRESSION THAT MANCHAM WILL
BE LIKELY TO CRITICIZE "UNFAIRNESS" OF TRACKING STATION
AGREEMENT DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGN, PARTICULARLY IF
OPPOSITION PARTY MAKES TRACKING STATION AN ELECTION ISSUE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 NAIROBI 8605

4. MY CONVERSATION WITH OPPOSITION PARTY LEADERS RENE AND SINON WERE ALSO DISCOURAGING INsofar AS FUTURE STABILITY OF SEYCHELLES IS CONCERNED. RENE EXPLICITLY STATED THAT SPUP WOULD BOYCOTT FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS UNLESS BRITISH GOVERNMENT AGREED TO THEIR REQUEST FOR ELECTORAL REDISTRICTING WHICH WOULD BE MORE FAVORABLE TO SPUP. OPPOSITION LEADERS WERE HIGHLY CRITICAL OF MANCHAM'S HEAVY EMPHASIS ON TOURISM IN DEVELOPMENT OF SEYCHELLES ECONOMY. WHEREAS MANCHAM PLANS ON SIX-FOLD INCREASE IN TOURIST ACCOMODATIONS TO BRING TOTAL TO OVER FIVE THOUSAND BEDS (WHICH WOULD BE EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT OF POPULATION), SPUP LEADERS ADVOCATE MORE BALANCED DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMY, PARTICULARLY EMPHASIZING EXPANSION OF FISHING AND AGRICULTURAL SECTORS.

5. WHILE I DELIBERATELY AVOIDED DISCUSSING WITH SINON STRIKE THREATENED BY HIS UNION AGAINST TRACKING STATION
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OVER ISSUE OF FREE HOT LUNCHES, MY CONVERSATIONS WITH US SUB-CONTRACTOR POMEROY AND OTHER KNOWLEDGEABLE PERSONS SUGGEST THAT A STRIKE BY TRACKING STATION CUSTODIAL PERSONNEL IS REAL POSSIBILITY IN NEW YEAR. WHILE EMPLOYEES THEMSELVES REPORTEDLY NOT ANXIOUS TO STRIKE ON THIS ISSUE, SPUP MAY FIND THIS CONVENIENT DEVICE TO STIMULATE PUBLIC CRITICISM OF STATION HELPFUL TO ITS LOCAL ELECTION PROSPECTS, WAS WELL AS MEANS OF SATISFYING ITS OAU SUPPORTERS IN AFRICA. WHILE SUB-CONTRACTOR WILL PRESUMABLY SEEK TO AVOID STRIKE THROUGH REASONABLE CONCESSIONS, POLITICAL MOTIVATIONS OF UNION MY MAKE STRIKE ON SOME PRETEXT UNAVOIDABLE.

6. MY CONVERSATIONS WITH BRITISH GOVERNOR ALLAN AND WITH HIS DEPUTY (TODD) SUGGESTED THAT BRITISH MOST ANXIOUS TO AVOID TROUBLE AT TRACKING STATION, EVEN IF THIS WOULD MEAN MAKING MAJOR CONCESSIONS TO EXCEPTIONALLY WELL PAID TRACKING STATION WORKERS. TODD, AS WELL AS CHIEF MINISTER MANCHAM, ALSO INDICATED THAT WE SHOULD BE THINKING IN TERMS OF EVENTUAL NEED TO REVISE TRACKING STATION AGREEMENT SO AS TO REMOVE PROVISIONS WHICH SEYCHELLOIS CONSIDER TO BE UNFAIR. BRITISH OFFICIALS GAVE NO INDICATION THEIR PREFERENCES RE TIMING OR FORM EVENTUAL SELF-GOVERNMENT OF SEYCHELLES.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. I WOULD RECOMMEND THAT WE CONTINUE PRESENT POLICY OF AVOIDING SUPPORT FOR EITHER OF TWO PRESENT POLITICAL PARTIES AND THAT WE TRY TO IMPROVE US IMAGE IN SEYCHELLES (1) BY INCREASING OUR SELF-HELP PROGRAMS IN SUPPORT OF WORTHWHILE PROJECTS; (2) BY EXPANDING OUR PEACE CORPS PROGRAM (FIRST VOLUNTEER WILL BE ARRIVING EARLY NEXT MONTH); (3) BY SCHEDULING SOMEWHAT MORE FREQUENT VISITS TO ISLANDS BY MEMBERS OF THIS EMBASSY; AND (4) BY SEEKING BETTER SEYCHELLES PRESS COVERAGE OF US ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES. THESE STEPS SHOULD TO SOME EXTENT OFFSET ADVERSE IMPRESSION CREATED BY TERMINATION OF OUR PL-480 FOOD PROGRAM AND POLITICIANS' CRITICISM OF TRACKING STATION. AS FOR TRACKING STATION, I BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO LIVE WITH SOME "ANTI-MILITARY BASE" PUBLICITY IN AFRICA AS WELL AS IN SEYCHELLES DURING COMING YEAR, BUT THAT THIS CAN HOPEFULLY

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BE KEPT WITHIN REASONABLE BOUNDS BY CAREFUL ATTENTION TO STATION LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS AND CONTINUATION OF TRACKING STATION'S COMMENDABLE ACTIVITIES IN CHARITABLE AND RELATED FIELDS. I DO NOT FEEL WE SHOULD BE PANICKED INTO OFFERING AT THIS TIME TO RENEGOTIATE TRACKING STATION AGREEMENT. CONCESSIONS WHICH WOULD BE INVOLVED IN SUCH RENEGOTIATION WILL PROBABLY BE MORE IMPORTANT TO US INTERESTS AT SUCH TIME AS SEYCHELLES MOVE TO INDEPENDENCE OR FULL INTERNAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 DEC 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973NAIROB08605
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: NAIROBI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731216/aaaaalli.tel
Line Count: 254
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: STATE 226846 (NOTAL)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09-Jan-2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <30-Jan-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US-SEYCHELLES RELATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, SE, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005